

IN VARIOUS MOODS

STUART LIVINGSTON

WITHDRAWN

- ☐ DESELECTED
- ☐ LOST
- ☐ DAMAGED
- ☐ MISSING (INV.)
- ☐ OTHER

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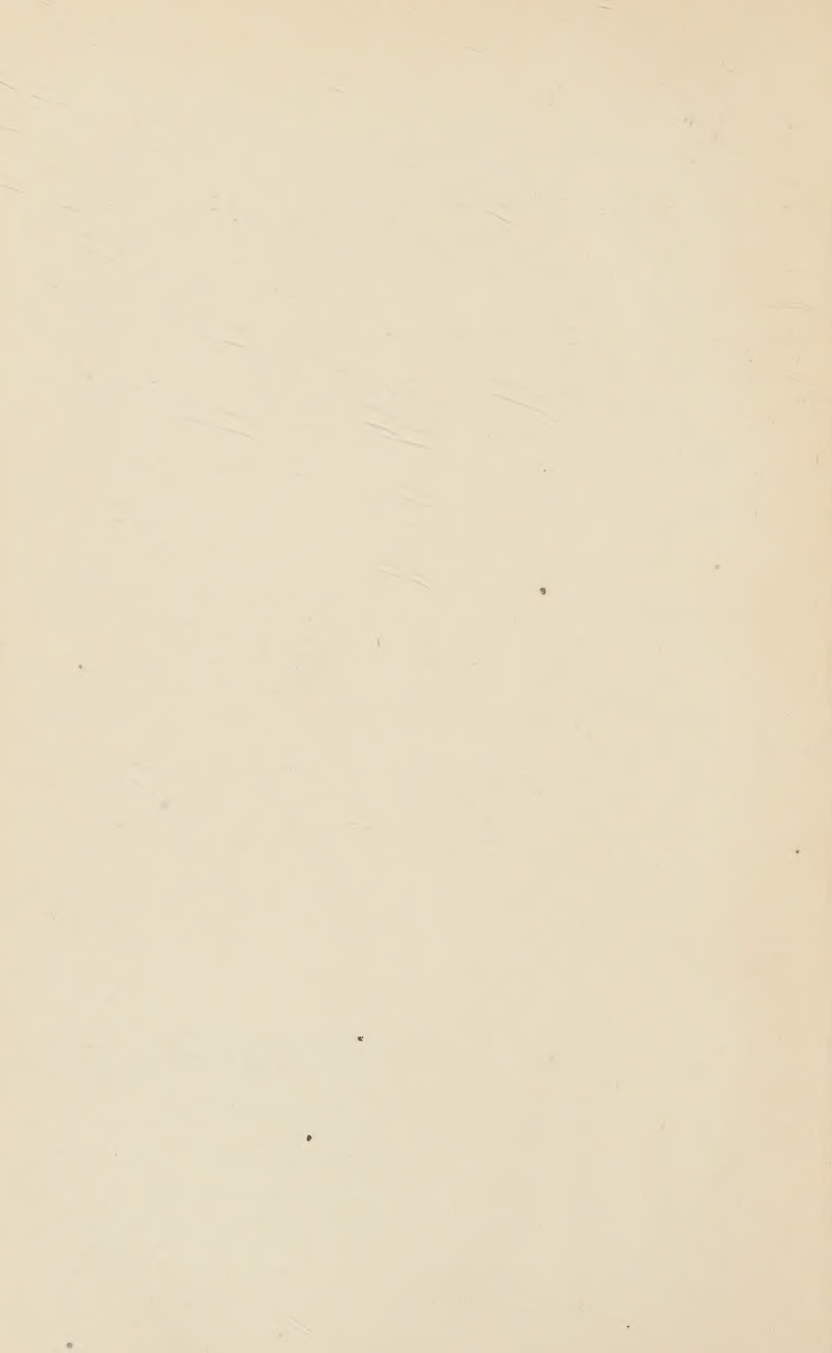
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IN VARIOUS MOODS.

POEMS.

BY

STUART LIVINGSTON.

TORONTO:

WILLIAM BRIGGS.

MONTREAL: C. W. COATES.

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1894.

Entered, according to the Act of the Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-four, by WILLIAM BRIGGS, in the office of the Minister of Agriculture, at Ottawa.

To
My Mother.

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IN VARIOUS MOODS.

(IN ITALY.)

NIGHT in the south, beneath Italian skies,
Shot over with a glow of amethyst ;
Still waters stretching outward to the mist
That folds the distance where the twilight dies.
Tall mountains from their mighty bastions rise,
Lifting their calm brows upward to the night,
Dim pinnaced amid the clouds with white
Of the eternal snow that on them lies.

Such beauties in this Italy there are !
Yet is my spirit not content, but takes
Its wingèd flight where lies a land afar,
On whose wide breast my heart its haven makes,
Beneath the fixed light of the northern star—
Ah, these are not my mountains, and my lakes !

TO A ROSE.

Ah, little rose, thou comest from her fingers,
Whose gentle soul stoops earthward like a star,
And on me sheds a gleam of hope, that lingers
When all this world dies in the dim afar.

And if I speak her name in accents tender,
No one can know, for thou alone shalt hear ;
And if I love her then who is thy sender,
Thou wilt not whisper it to any ear.

For thou hast nestled close among the laces
That hide her timid bosom's spotless snow,
And so much purity in such a place is,
Thou must be pure, so thou alone shalt know

My secret ; and to pledge its sacred keeping,
I bid thee seek the place from whence thou art,
That thou again, among the laces sleeping,
In dreams may speak it to her listening heart.

A SONG OF PEACE.

THOUGH wide the waves be troubled
 Beneath the wind's strong will,
Yet in its infinite deep on deep
 The blue above is still.

And when the winds are weary,
 And waves are weary, too,
The sky above will shed on them
 The stillness of its blue.

O heart, though thou art troubled
 Beneath the world's strong will,
Yet in its deep abiding place
 The heart of God is still.

And when thy tired spirit
 Most longs to find surcease,
The Heart above will shed on thee
 Its own eternal peace.

LOVE LIES DEAD BETWEEN US.

WHY should I care when thou dost not,
That Love lies dead between us?
Yet, as I look upon his face,
I cannot quite forget the grace
That fills in memory each place
His roguish eyes have seen us.

How merry was the laugh he gave,
And bright as summer weather,
When on his tiptoes, light as dew
On grass, he stole upon us two,
And found us there together.

He seemed as he had lately come
From some good man of stitches,
So gaily was the youngster dressed
In silken coat and figured vest,
Cap, buckles, ribbons of the best,
And satin cloth knee-breeches.

I never recognized the sprite
(Much to his own enjoyment),
But took him for a peasant lad,
Who served the king as page, or had
Some other court employment.

Yet I recall—ah, yes, full well—
That when he passed between us,
Thy little hand stole into mine,
And fired my blood as if with wine ;
The while I spent my lips on thine,
And wondered if he'd seen us,

And now he lies between us dead—

I must confess I mourn him ;

But not for any thought of thee,

Nor for the vows from which I'm free,

Nor that my heart is dead in me ;

If 'twere for these, I'd scorn him.

But 'tis because the little elf

First taught my soul to measure—

When speaking to my heart of thee,

Unfolding all thou wert to me—

The limitless, unfathomed sea

Of love's unbounded pleasure.

When sad, he'd whisper in my ear,

Be brave, for she doth love thee ;

Think on her eyes—pure deeps of blue—

Note well her heart, unaltered, true,

And pure as heaven above thee.

At which my soul, by love impelled,
 Would beat its earthly portals,
With longing only to be free,
And waste itself with love of thee—
Such love, as hold the gods in fee,
 Being too great for mortals.

But all is past ; poor little Love
 Between us dead is lying ;
Before we part just one last kiss—
It surely cannot be amiss—
Thy lips are trembling ! What is this ?
 It cannot be thou'rt crying.

And all thy face is pale, the rose
 Its well-loved place forsaking—
Ah yes ! 'tis hard to part in tears.
Then let us pledge the coming years
With each old vow that more endears,
 For Love, the rogue, is waking.

HER EYES ARE SHADED DEEP
WITH PRAYER.

HER eyes are shaded deep with prayer ;
Around her forehead softly clings,
Like an aureole of light,
The golden glory of her hair.

The wonder on her face is strange,
As though to her it had been given
To look with those blue eyes beyond
The bourne that closes mortal range ;

As one whom nought else had sufficed
To still the longing of her heart,
Till God had drawn the veil, and she
Had looked within and seen the Christ.

MUSIC.

OH, take thy stringèd wonder tenderly,
Thy throbbing strings, thy magic bow that cries—
The hidden voice that in this moment lies
Untroubled—to the restlessness in me,
And speak a tale from aught of passion free ;
A tale of holy calm, devoid of strife,
Drawn for the soul from those deep wells of life,
Whose waters God doth fill eternally ;
A tale of strength to suffer and be still,
With one strong purpose, though the world may change ;
Patient to wait the varying time, until
The soul, grown great, shall break its narrow range,
And from the thing I am forever free,
I rise to all that I have longed to be.

A CORNER IN THE FIELD.

THERE is a corner of a wide ploughed field
That long ago I knew,
Wherein the wild rose trained its thirsty cup
To catch the grateful dew.

And on the topmost railing of the fence
That ran the field along,
A lordly robin, with inflated breast,
Was wont to pipe his song.

And there have I through many afternoons,
Amid the grasses tall,
Sat listening to the voice of one I loved,
And to that robin's call,

Till all the field fell far away from me,
As some forgotten place,
And I but heard the sweet tones of her voice,
And saw her shy young face.

Perchance some lordly robin yet doth stand
And pipe his roundelay;
But she, the tender light that filled the place
Will come no more that way.

Perchance the wild rose yet doth train its cup
To catch the grateful dew;
But never shall I seek that nook again
Which long ago I knew.

∟ THE KING'S FOOL.

IN sooth he was a mighty king,
And ruled in splendid state,
Surrounded by a haughty band
Of nobles, small and great ;
And he was good to one and all,
Yet were they plotting for his fall.

For though a king be good and great
And generous, I trow
His nobles yet will envy him,
And seek his overthrow ;
For so hath been the ancient strife
Since man first took his sovereign's life.

The King's Fool.

And thus, to gain their foul design,
They planned to lie in wait,
And drop a deadly poison in
The golden flagon great,
That never more the king should rule;
And no one heard them but the fool.

So when the king came down that night
Into his hall to dine,
He found his flagon in its place,
And at its side the wine,
The blood-red wine, at which he said,
"Such wine should put life in the dead!"

Then poured he full the poisoned cup,
And, raising it on high,
O'er all his courtiers in the hall
He ran his noble eye:
"Oh, I would drink," he said, with zest,
"Unto the man that loves me best!"

Then mute they sat around the board,
And each looked to the other,
Till rose, with mocking reverence,
The fool, and said, "Good brother,
All round this board, of every guest,
I am the man that loves thee best."

Then wrothful was the king, and said,
"Thou art no man, I wis,
That makest such a silly jest
At such a time as this.
Give us a better jest," he said,
"Or pay the forfeit with thy head."

Then quoth the fool, "My good liege lord,
I'll give another jest,
But after it, I tell thee now,
That I will take my rest,
No more to be thy jester," and
He snatched the flagon from his hand.

Then dark became the king's great brow,
Amazed was every guest,
While with the flagon at his lips
The fool quoth, "This sweet jest
That man, I trow, will best divine
Who poured such strength into this wine"—

Then drained the goblet at a draught,
And set it down anon,
While round the board each face grew pale,
And strange to look upon ;
Then sank the fool into his place,
And on the table laid his face.

Amid the silence stood the king,
As if perplexed with doubt ;
He looked upon his poor dead fool,
And then looked round about ;
And then in thunder called the guard
That near him kept their watch and ward.

He bid them take the traitors forth
And put them all to death.
“Would God,” he cried, “their lives could give
My poor fool back his breath—
My poor dead fool, whose silent breast
Doth show too late he loved me best!”

This is the legend of a fool
Who died his king to save,
And to its truth a monument
Was built above his grave;
And writ in gold this wording ran,
“He lived a fool, but died a man.”

A SONG.

THE bird must have a nesting place
Somewhere in leafy bowers ;
The grass beneath the hot noon sun
Doth long for cooling showers ;
The thirsty flower must have the dew
Its sweet life to prolong,
But my heart, my heart
Must have song.

The dove with weary wing doth search
For groves wherein to rest ;
The swan doth seek the hidden stream
To sleep upon its breast ;
The prisoned bird within its cage
For wide blue sky doth long,
But my heart, my heart
Must have song.

A LITTLE MAIDEN.

THERE is a little maid that twirls
My heart upon her fingers,
As airily as doth the bush
The latest leaf that lingers
When summer time is spent. Her heart !
I'd scarce believe she had one ;
And I should know, for after it
My chase has been a sad one.

But when the slightest thing that calls
For sympathy appears,
There's something—it must be her heart—
That fills her eyes with tears.
Her hair is like the golden plenty
Of the sunlight falling ;
Her voice is music like the echo
Of a song bird calling.

In tender ways she spends her days
All good things to discover;
But words of mine can only give
The poorest picture of her.
She treats me so, at times I'm sad
To think I ever met her;
And yet, no matter how I try,
I cannot quite forget her.

"THERE IS A GOD," SHE SAID.

"THERE is a God," she said, and all her face,
Transfigured with her heart's own purity,
Let fall such touch of heaven on the place,
As set at rest the troubled heart in me,

Until I felt her solemn words were true ;
For, as I looked on her with feelings awed,
The thought that gave her soul to earth I knew
Could spring but from the infinite heart of God.

HE KNOWS.



O THEOU, great God, that from the arches high,
Which span immensity, didst speak the word
That wrought the world, and peopled all the sky
With sun and moon and stars that have not erred
Within their courses fixedly to run—
Thou great All-knowing, yet so all unknown.

Dost Thou not know these sands of earth that are
The little habitation of the soul?
Dost Thou not know the fires that scorch and mar,
And fain would utterly consume the whole?
Hast 't thou then breathed the soul into the dust,
And art not merciful as well as just.

Ah, God ! this living were a vainful dream

Had we not faith that somewhere in the round
Of shadows, ever deepening, that seem

To close our vision of the outward bound,
An eye doth watch us patiently afar
With tender pity, knowing what we are.

MY LADY.

My lady is not over tall,
In sooth a little maiden she,
Yet I, who am beneath her thrall,
Am more content therein to be
Than ever subject yet, I ween,
To bow before his rightful queen.

My lady hath an eye of blue,
That bears its shading from the sky,
And purposes so pure and true
Within her timid breast do lie,
That every thought arising there
Doth deep the blue as with a prayer.

My lady's hair is like the light
Illumining a falling mist ;
It floats adown her shoulders white
In waves that nothing can resist,
Yet minds her very lightest touch
When straying o'er her face too much.

My lady's voice hath said to me
The sweetest words that one may hear ;
Yet, had I every similé
That to the poet's heart is dear,
I could not liken it to aught,
With so much music is it fraught.

I love my lady, not as those
Who sip the pleasures of an hour,
For every moment doth disclose
In her some yet more priceless dower ;
And if it bring me weal or woe
I care not, for I love her so.

IN DECEMBER.

THE woods that summer loved are grey and bare ;
The sombre trees stretch up their arms on high,
In mute appeal, against the leaden sky ;
A flurry faint of snow is in the air.
All day the clouds have hung in heavy fold
Above the valley, where grey shadows steal ;
And I, who sit and watch them, seem to feel
A touch of sadness as the day grows old.

But o'er my fancy comes a tender face,
A dream of curls that float like sunlight golden --
A subtle fragrance, filling all the place,
The whisper of a story that is olden --
Till breaks the sun through dull December skies,
And all the world is springtime in the deep blue of
her eyes.

MY LADY'S PICTURE.

WHAT hath my lady sent to me
That I so greatly prize?
It giveth more of sweet content
To my delighted eyes
Than could the rarest gem of art
Than ever sprang from human heart.

Perchance a charm from far-off isles,
Where wild exotics grow,
Woody from the bud to fullest flower
By winds that on them blow;
While dainty sprites, with cunning rare,
Carve fateful charms to banish care.

My Lady's Picture.

Nay, 'tis no charm she sends me, but
The picture of her face,
Wherein doth delicately rest
Such witchery of grace,
To take a single glance at it
Would drive out every moody fit.

A tender face, with shy young eyes
By love divinely lit,
As if they saw my longing look
And fain would answer it ;
Bidding me lay aside all care
Since Love doth hold his kingdom there.

And what unto my lady now
Shall I in answer send ?
Some costly gem of purest light,
Wherein bright lustres blend ?
Nay, I a simple song will give
That tells a place where love doth live.

A place that knoweth naught but love,
And love of her alone ;
Wherein she, all unconsciously,
Doth sit upon a throne :
And in this kingdom every part
Is governed by her own sweet heart.

Yes, I will send this simple song,
Wherein I've tried to paint
A picture of such longing as
For love of her doth faint ;
And she will know—ah, yes, full well—
Where is the place of which I tell.

Thus, for the picture of her face,
Which by her grace I get,
That I no longer now may be
So deeply in her debt,
I'll send my lady, on my part,
This song-made picture of my heart.

THE BRIDAL.

SHE walks in beauty down the world
To meet her lover in the west.
O happy, timid, beauteous day,
Thy head will soon be on his breast.

Her eyes are heaven's azure deeps ;
The still white cloud her veil shall be ;
Her voice's music is a wind
That whispers low in melody.

Her brow is of the early dawn ;
Her hair is of the radiant light
That falls in golden splendor down
Behind her veil's soft-misted white.

The night, her lover in the west,
 With starry eyes, doth wait his bride,
And stretches up his shadowy arms
 To draw her gently to his side.

She stoops her lips to touch his brow ;
 Her head sinks low upon his breast ;
The pure red wine—the bridal wine—
 Is poured from all the crimson west.

AN IMPRESSION.

WHEN passing through a garden, one
May chance to see a rose
That delicately on the bush
Its beauty doth disclose ;
He looks the while its loveliness
Doth fill his grateful eye,
Then, with its fragrance following,
He goes regretful by.

Perchance as time doth pass, he thinks
He hath forgotten it,
Till, all alone, some dreary day
He wearily doth sit
And watch the rain against the pane
That falling comes and goes,
When, suddenly, his heart is charmed
With mem'ry of that rose.

I only know I met her when
The light, that on her hair
Had played the wanton, softly stooped
To kiss her forehead fair ;
And, being well content to find
So sweet a resting place,
It lingered there and showed me all
The beauty of her face.

I did not think I had forgot—
For who could well forget
The mem'ry of so fair a face,
Filled with such light?—and yet
To-day, as all alone I sat,
I was not charmed the less
When o'er my fancy came her face,
And lit my dreariness.

Her outward beauty, well I know,
Is not her fairest grace,
For God, who made her, surely would
Not give her such a face
Without a tender heart that longs
His meanest things to bless ;
And this to-day my dream of her
That charmed my dreariness.

TO E. N. L.

THOU sweet-souled comrade of a time gone by
Who in the infinite dost walk to-day,
And lift thy spirit lips in song, while I
Lift up but lips of clay—

Oft do I think on thee, thou steadfast heart,
Who, when the summons dread was in thine ear,
Didst raise thy calm brow up and challenge death,
As one that knows not fear.

And I have wondered if thy passionate lips
Now voice the songs that surged within thy heart ;
By the great alchemy of mighty death
Freed to diviner art.

And didst thou find a welcome on the shore
That rims the vastness of that shadow land ?
Did those sweet singing prophet bards of yore
Stretch thee a greeting hand ?

And did they gather round about thee there,
 With faces grey against the coming day ;
And, with wan fingers on thy trembling lips,
 Teach thee their mighty lay ?

Till thy enraptured soul, by thine own lips,
 Was filled with such great harmony of song,
As gave thee place among their matchless selves,
 A brother of the throng.

THE SINGER.

'Twas in an old Swiss town—
At eventide I strolled
Along the quiet quay,
Watching the shaded gold
That lit the mountains with a flame,
As over them the darkness came.

Till from their lofty brows
Vanished the fading light,
And all the air was filled
With stillness of the night,
Save where against the quay's great stone
The water sang its monotone.

But sudden on my ear
 There rang a merry song,
That made such laughter spring
 Amid the little throng
That joined the café in a ring,
I went across to hear him sing.

He was a handsome youth,
 With hair like flowing jet ;
Erect he stood, his face
 Aglow with laughter ; yet
For all his mirth, it seemed to me,
His dark eyes looked despairingly.

And still he stood erect
 Beneath the flashing glare
That filled the small café
 With brightness everywhere,
And on that merry-hearted throng
Poured out the laughter of his song.

At length he reached the end
And ceased, but all the crowd,
Mid bravos and applause,
Cried out in voices loud :
“ We would hear more ! Give more ! ” they said—
He only stood, and bowed his head.

An old man turned to me,
“ He sings well for his pay,”
He said, “ but not much heart :
To-day I heard them say,
The young girl that he would have wed
Is over yonder lying dead.”

.
'Twas long ago I sat
Amid that merry throng,
And heard that brave young voice
Ring out the laughing song,
Charming the crowd that gave him bread,
The while his heart was with his dead.

And often have I thought
How many a strong young soul,
Aflame with purpose great
To reach some shining goal,
Doth crush itself amid the dust
To gain the hunger-staying crust.

SMITTEN BY FLAME OF THE SUN.

SMITTEN by flame of the sun,
Up from the anguished deep
Riseth the nebulous mist,
Forming the clouds that, asleep,
Far in the fields of the sky
Float through the azure unfurled,
Shedding their life-giving rain,
Quenching the thirst of the world.

Thus, O thou builder of songs,
Singing that bringeth the tears,
And on the life of mankind
Sheddeth the peace that endears
Each to his brother the more—
Never such singing divine
Canst thou give to the heart of the world,
Save from the deep anguish of thine.

TO A PICTURE IN A LOCKET.

As in the quiet of some holy place,
Where kneels the worshipper amid the dim
And solemn twilight, while an unseen choir
Chants in a measured voice a mighty hymn
That steals among the fretted arches tall,
And dies away along the winding aisle ;
Till, like a gleaming flame o'er waters dark,
From out the west the sun's expiring rays
Break through the painted windows, falling far
Above the altar on the pictured head
Of some fair saint who hangs enhaloed there,
Till to th' enraptured worshipper it seems
The temple wall has sundered far apart,
And through the breach he sees, or seems to see,
The far off heaven of his dreams descend ;

While out the holy light that fills the place
An angel face looks in upon the soul,
Whose mild blue eyes constrain his lips to prayer.
So out this arch of gold thy shadow face
Steals tenderly upon my eager gaze,
Illumined by the story of old days
And memories full of gentle radiance,
That mingle sunlight in thy wavy hair,
And paint thine eyes with softest shade of blue,
Filling them with a light akin to prayer,
And weave around thy lips the old-time smile,
Until they almost seem to move with voice—
So nearly move that I half feel a fear
Lest they again should bid me say farewell,
And cast my soul from Heaven into night.

KEATS.

A YOUNG-EYED seer, amid the leafy ways
Of Latmos' groves, sacred to mighty Pan,
Afar from all the busy marts of man,
Content to seek the beautiful, he strays ;
With mild eyes lifted in their starry gaze
Of ravishment divine, a priest, he stands
Before the altar builded by his hands,
And on his pipe, with pallid lip, he plays.

This night, O god-like singer, have I knelt
Before that altar listening to thy strain,
Till off my soul mortality did melt,
Dissolvéd from all weariness of pain ;
And at thy magic melody I felt
All life were mine, could I such rapture drain.

LOVE AND MY LADY.

O I HAVE seen my lady pass,
Upon a sunlit day,
Across the happy shining fields
Swept by the winds of May,
While at her side, with pleasant talk,
The little god of Love did walk.

And, looking up into her eyes,
He made such funny quips
The young rogue brought a merry smile
About my lady's lips ;
Then, drawing down her sweet face near,
He slyly whispered in her ear.

I knew he spoke of me to her,
For, soon as she had heard,
She straightway turned her eyes on me,
But never said a word ;
At which, alas ! the little sprite
Ran off, and hid himself from sight.

BETHLEHEM.

SHE hath not heard of Herod's hate,
She hath not seen the star
That in the sky doth shed its light
To call men from afar ;
She only sees upon her knee
Her baby, sleeping tranquilly.

She hath not heard the angels sing
Their holy song of peace,
That falls upon a weary world,
And bids its tumult cease ;
She only hears the breathings low
That through the wee lips come and go.

The lowly ass doth stand near by
And feed beside the stall ;
The dim light serveth but to cast
Dark shadows over all :
She hath no fear amid the place,
She only sees that little face.

She knoweth that her baby's feet
Are warm beneath her touch ;
She looketh down upon his face,
That face she loves so much,
And dreams that out beyond the night
She hears him called the King of Light

But, on a sudden, all her face
Doth pale, as though she heard
Amid the night a whisper strange
That all her being stirred :
Ah, she hath dreamed a darkened land
Wherein three silent crosses stand.

A IF.

“I THINK I love you most,” she said.

Her timid eyes were downcast then,
And something gleamed beneath the lids

And glistened on the lashes when
They slowly lifted up to mine ;

And mine were wet—could it be tears?
With me tears will be common things

In coming years.

Upon the sky there sits a star

That gleams through all the wasting night ;
The waters, rushing from afar,

Break on the coast beneath its light,
And as they break they are a voice.

The still light lives ; I can discern
Her form, and in my soul rejoice

At her return.

I feel the soft blue of her eyes,
Suffused with tears, upon me rest ;
I smell the odors faint that rise
From violets upon her breast ;
Her breath is warm upon my cheek,
My hand could almost touch her hair ;
Her lips are framed as they would speak
For me a prayer.

The light is dead within the sky,
The waves are stilled upon the coast ;
Dull shadows through the darkness fly,
And in the deeper gloom are lost.
It was the thought of one who dreams,
The fancy of a poet's brain,
The shadow of a hope that seems
To live again.

Yet, if it were reality,
And I might see those downcast eyes,
If only I again might see
Her gentle bosom fall and rise ;
And know the violets were there
I plucked for her but yestereven,
And smell the fragrance on the air
Which they had given.

If I might hear—though it should be

As but a faintly whispered breath,

Born of her tender sympathy—

I'd dare to link my life with Death,

And in the darkness go his way,

And nothing reck the awful cost,

If I to-night might hear her say,

“I love you most.”

✧ MY LADY'S MIRROR.

HID in the quiet cloisters of the wood,
Where grasses slumber 'mid the shadows cool,
There lieth at its ease a little pool,
Unlighted, save when thro' its leafy hood
Some straying sunbeam breaks its timid way.
Here doth my lady come apart to sit,
And, resting, doth make pretty mouths at it ;
It is her mirror, so the song-birds say.

Courageous little pool, more brave than I ;
For when my lady cometh to the wood,
And looketh down upon thee scornfully,
Thou dost as scornfully look back ; but should
She cast such glance at me, without reply
My heart would quail at her capricious mood.

A PRAYER.

O SAVIOUR, when upon my latest vision
My life is shadowed forth, a finished tale,
And I can see how oft the world's derision
Has made so utterly my purpose fail ;
When I am covered over with affliction
To see so little good through all the years,
Speak to my chastened soul a benediction,
And wipe away my tears.

O Saviour, when, 'mid shadows darkly falling,
My dying eyes gaze into naught but night,
While round me the deep density appalling
Would lead my soul to shudder with affright ;
When dimly all my being's fire is burning,
O wrap me round with Thy sustaining grace,
And when my sightless eyes are upward turning,
O may they see Thy face.

TO AN EARLY ROBIN.

HEIGH-HO, little bard of the woods !

Why are you singing so madly ?

Spring, Spring, Spring, Spring,

Spring, you say, is here ;

That this was the first and the last of all springs

To hear you one would think sadly ;

Though many a spring has come before,

And another will come next year.

And still you sing on, little bard of the woods,

Joyously, gaily and gladly,

Till every nook of this dull old world

Re-echoes your wild note clear ;

And I would that you sing, though your echoing song

Has brought to me, surely and sadly,

That one whom I love will have gone from me

When the Spring cometh in next year.

A SKETCH.

SHE fills each place with stately grace,
Her form is radiance begun ;
Where'er she goes the flowers uncloze,
And turn to her as to the sun.
Her wavy hair floats down like air,
Her eyes are exquisitely blue,
And through them shine those lights divine
That speak a heart so true.

Her every word—like voice of bird,
That in the early twilight dim
Flings out its note on air afloat
To swell the joyous morning hymn—
Is sweeter far than ever are
The songs distilled by aid of art.
And oft again in low refrain
Pours music in my heart.

A MILKING SONG.

SOFTLY the light on high
Fades from the western sky,
Slow from the meadows by,
The cows are coming.

“Snow” is the first to come,
“Spot” will be second home,
“White” shall stay all alone
Through the night roaming.

AT CHURCH.

I HEAR the chanting of the psalm
 Upon the quiet air,
I see the bended heads, and feel
 The hush that follows prayer ;
The while my eyes have crossed the church,
 And whispered she is there.

The light, that in the quiet dawn
 Broke through the bar of Heaven,
And wandered earthward, seeking rest,
 And found no rest was given,
Falls through the window on her face,
 And lingers there at even.

Till I half dream that I have winged
 Beyond the flood of space,
Beyond the barriers of God,
 Within His holy place ;
And, by the silver waters stilled,
 Have seen an angel's face.

The silent flame that fills her soul,
 Her lips have voiced in prayer ;
I listen eagerly, perchance
 My name may linger there ;
But naught of me is in the words
 She breathes upon the air.

The latest prayer is said ; beyond
 The west slow dies the light ;
The music, with a broken wing,
 Has fallen in its flight ;
And I, who sought for rest,
 Am restless, turning toward the night.

A MARY MAGDALENE.

O WORLD, thou canst not drag me back to thee ;
Dead are thy sinewy arms ; thy fevered touch
Of passion hath no power over me :

He calls for me, my Lord who loved me much.
His voice, His voice divine is in the street,
And I would go that I may kiss His feet.

And dost thou linger yet to loose thy hold ?

Oh, stay me not. I know thy gems are rare ;
I know the yellow lustre of thy gold,

But didst thou offer all thou holdest fair
I would not stay ; His voice doth call me so
It melts my heart. Quick, loose me, let me go !

Oh, stay me not, thy touch doth hinder me,
As doth the cage a bird that seeks the sky;
The world of love, the heart that pityingly
Did draw me from myself, is coming nigh;
The Lord my Master's voice is in the street,
Oh, let me go that I may kiss His feet.

A MEMORY.

HER eyes, so blue and gentle,
Look out with tender light ;
Her throat among the laces
Is exquisitely white ;
Her hair is caught upon her head
In little curling tresses ;
Her lips illumined with the smile
That she alone possesses.
The sunlight, stealing through the leaves,
Drops gold upon her hair,
The sprig of balsam on her breast
Exhales a perfume rare ;
And at her side, upon the grass,
Am I, who love her so,
Awaiting till she speaks the word
That bids me stay or go.

.

Said I at any time her eyes were blue,
And looked from out their depth with tender light,
Or put in words the rapture of her smile,
Or said her throat was exquisitely white ?
I may have said it, but it seems so long
Since that last time I looked upon her face,
That in my life she lingers like some dream
A sleeper hath of heaven's holy place,
That falls from out the night upon his soul,
And fills him with the glory of its light ;
Then leaves him, till he starts upon his couch,
And wakes to find that all it leaves is night.

THE VOLUNTEERS OF '85.

WIDE are the plains to the north and the westward ;
Drear are the skies to the west and the north—
Little they cared, as they snatched up their rifles,
And shoulder to shoulder marched gallantly forth.
Cold are the plains to the north and the westward,
Stretching out far to the grey of the sky—
Little they cared as they marched from the barrack-room,
Willing and ready, if need be, to die.

Bright was the gleam of the sun on their bayonets ;
Firm and erect was each man in his place ;
Steadily, evenly, marched they like veterans ;
Smiling and fearless was every face ;

Never a dread of the foe that was waiting them ;
Never a fear of war's terrible scenes ;
" Brave as the bravest," was stamped on each face of them ;
Half of them boys not yet out of their teens.

Many a woman gazed down at them longingly,
Scanning each rank for her boy as it passed ;
Striving through tears just to catch a last glimpse of him,
Knowing that glimpse might, for aye, be the last.
Many a maiden's cheek paled as she looked at them,
Seeing the lover from whom she must part ;
Trying to smile and be brave for the sake of him,
Stifling the dread that was breaking her heart.

Every heart of us, wild at the sight of them,
Beat as it never had beaten before ;
Every voice of us, choked though it may have been,
Broke from huzza to a deafening roar.
Proud ! were we proud of them ? God ! they were part of us,
Sons of us, brothers, all marching to fight ;
Swift at their country's call, ready each man and all,
Eager to battle for her and the right.

Wide are the plains to the north and the westward,
 Stretching out far to the grey of the sky—
Little they cared as they filed from the barrack-room,
 Shoulder to shoulder, if need be, to die.
Was there one flinched? Not a boy, not a boy of them ;
 Straight on they marched to the dread battle's brunt—
Fill up your glasses and drink to them, all of them,
 Canada's call found them all at the front.

A CRADLE SONG.

O FAINT and far the angels are
 Calling, my babe, to thee ;
O faint and low their voices flow
 In a ceaseless melody ;
Far away down from the distant skies,
Where the old moon, wasted and dying, lies,
 In the midst of a silver sea.
O slumber quick, for thou must not go,
Because thy mother loves thee so.

And still they call, and their voices all
 Are bidding thee come away,
To where they sing of a radiant King
 Whose robe is the light of day ;

And they whisper a tale of a land afar,
Where the sunlight dies at the golden bar,
And to light it there needeth not ever a star,
For the Lord is the light, they say.
O sleep, my babe, and thou wilt not know,
For thy mother cannot let thee go.

O sleep, my babe, for I have prayed
The Christ to let thee stay,
And now on high from out the sky
The voices die away.
The voices are still that were calling to thee,
And the angels have passed o'er that shadowy sea
That breaks on the shore of eternity,
In the light of an endless day.
Then sleep, my babe, and thou wilt not go,
For the good Christ knoweth I love thee so.

TO MISS MABEL.

You asked me, Miss Mabel, to write you some verses,
And nothing before such a pleasure I'd choose,
Did not I feel inwardly that the reverse is
Exactly the case with my diffident Muse.

Full far have I gone as a mortal might wander
To Erato's feet and Prometheus' rock ;
The sweet Muse admitted your graces beyond her,
The other declared I'd be killed by the shock.

I thought then, if love could not give me some verses,
Her sister, perchance, Polyhymnia, might ;
I sought out the mount where the Goddess rehearses,
Submitted my prayer, and got ready to write.

“Alas,” she exclaimed, “the presumption of mortals !”
(The phrase I’ve just quoted is straight from the Muse)
And added as, tearful, I passed through her portals,
“This language is nothing to what I might use.”

Yes, soon as I told her that you were the fair one
Of whom my desire would lead me to write,
She bid me ascend to Olympus, and there one
Might gather the power such lines to indite.

But through the wide range of her lyric dominion
She said that no language had ever been known
To faintly express (I but give her opinion)
Such graces as those you may claim for your own.

To Jove then I went to present my petition,
High up where the thunderings clamor the air,
Believing that there some successful fruition
Could scarce fail to be the result of my prayer.

But soon as your name I attempted to mention,
He darkened his brow, and he swore by all odds
The thing was beyond his divine comprehension,
He'd call into conclave the rest of the gods,

And give it their serious consideration
(This sounds more like Mowat than Jove, I'll admit),
Then straightway dismissed me, while shook with vibration
The mount of Olympus, as if in a fit.

I've waited, and waited, and waited, and waited ;
Believe me, Miss Mabel, I've waited an age,
Still hoping the answer, though somewhat belated,
Would reach me in time to go down on this page.

Alas, the unfounded presumption of mortals
(The phrase is my own now I know it by rote),
No answer comes through the Olympian portals,
Not even a messenger boy with a note.

If all of the gods, not to mention the Muses,
Find language to fail a description so rare,
You can't blame a mortal like me who refuses
To try what the gods have resigned in despair.

A GIFT.

THE mellow sunlight, like a mist
Of gold, was on thy hair;
I saw thine eyes look into mine,
And read a promise there;
I looked about to give thee all
I had, yet was so poor,
I only gave thee verses, love,
For I had little more.

Again the sunlight, falling down,
Made glorious thy hair,
But far from mine thine eyes were turned,
And saw another there.
I loved thee yet, and all of mine
Was thine, yet I, so poor,
Could give thee but a broken heart,
For I had nothing more.

THE DEATH OF THE POET.

AT morn, my masters, cradled in the mist,
The day awoke to life, yet scarce to life,
So deep a gloom lay over all the world.
The very winds that waited on its birth
Spoke low, as those who stand about and wait
The end of one who swiftly nears the end ;
And as it stepped adown the eastern hills,
Within the vale that leads afar to night,
It found all weeping and disconsolate.

A vale of tears, my son, in which it stepped.

Aye, masters, men have long time called it so.
It seemed a multitude was gathered there,
With all their gaze fixed on the single form

Of one who walked alone, as in old days
Weak mortals watched the struggles of the gods
Who joined the combat 'neath the walls of Troy.
Fearless he looked before, where lay a sea
Wide, dark and dreamless as the void of space,
Sunless, without a star ; and, as he walked,
The wail of those who watched him rose and fell,
As lost winds rise and fall on unknown seas.
Some were in plumèd armour ; some were dressed
In rustic garb of simple countrymen ;
And maids and matrons wept amid that throng,
Where all were bowed as weighed upon with woe.
Upon the hills that closed the valley in
There stood apart another multitude,
That looked with stricken faces in the vale.
And then the wonder grew upon me so
At this so strange and sorrowful a sight,
I turned to one who stood apart, and said :
“ My friend, who is this man, and who are they
That, watching him, thus spend themselves in tears ?
And who are they that stand upon the hills ? ”
He raised his glance to mine and made reply :

“ He is our sweetest singer, come at length
Down to the edge of life ; for yonder strand,
Whereon the waves of that dark ocean roll
Within the shadow, is the verge of time,
And they who watch him thus within the vale
Are children of his mighty brain and heart,
Whom he himself created. Look, the one,
Strong, brave and dauntless, with his lance in rest,
And on his face the light, is Galahad.
The one so like a lily is Elaine ;
And he whose heart is like a heavenly flame,
Whose beauty is the radiance of the pure,
Whose shield is blazoned with a cross of gold,
Who rides the nearest after him they mourn,
And always has been nearest to his heart,
Is Arthur, England’s first and purest knight.
There at the end, borne to the ground with grief,
Is Guinevere, the gentle Arthur’s Queen,
Who lost the poet’s love because she erred
And was not pure as he had made her fair.
The others are not less his children too,
Gereth, Lynette, the Princess, Launcelot,

And all the numerous, bright, imagined train
That mourn, refusing to be comforted,
Because he nears the limit of the world
And goes to join the friend whose death he sang.
Those who thus weep for him upon the hills
Are they who knew his children and himself,
And from them drew an inspiration pure
Which filled to overflow their lesser lives
With such great strength of purpose high and fixed
As raised them to a fellowship with God.”
He ceased, and as I watched the scene with awe,
Slow onward, steadfastly, with weary feet,
He made his way down to the dark-rimmed sea,
Where break the formless waves upon the strand
With noise like whispers spoken in the dark.
A ship lay anchored there amid the gloom,
No pinnace, but a tall and stately ship,
As built to bear across the gathered flood
A mighty spirit. Those upon the land
Stood still, with bated breath, in reverence,
And even forgot to weep as, filled with awe,
They listened for the last thing he would say.

The gloom was great, but as he stood erect
Upon the lofty deck, his eye fixed strong
Upon the density that lay before,
The moonlight broke the cloud and bathed his brow,
Serene and calm, in gentle silvery light,
While from his lips there fell these words of faith :
“ I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.”



EVENING IN MUSKOKA.

LIKE shrouded stars within a shrouded sky,
The lilies lie upon the lonely lake
And gleam among the rushes. Slowly break
The last faint dying flashes from on high.
Around the island lies a purple sheen
Of mist and twilight, folding it from view,
While far within the narrows, passing through,
The shadowy glimmer of a sail is seen.

A kingfisher, shrill chattering, swiftly flies
Far down the lake more lonely haunts to seek ;
The night winds from the deepening shadows rise,
And whisper slumber songs that softly creep
From point to point, until the echo dies
Far o'er the lake, and night folds all in sleep.

A SERENADE.

O LIFT up thine eyes from the spell they are under ;
Belovèd, awake from thy dreams of delight ;
I wait thee below, put thy lattice asunder,
And sail with me over the rim of the night.

Where deep in the heart of an island, dream-haunted,
That sleeps on the breast of the amorous sea—
Alull with old runes by the mermaidens chanted—
A palace of splendor is waiting for thee.

Ah, there, like an echo from Elfinland falling
In music that whispers an infinite rest,
Afar dies the note of the nightingale, calling
From woodland to woodland, from nest unto nest ;

Till moved by a sound that so gently entrances,
The spirit, unknowing, glides into a dream
Of soft sunny mouths, and the half-veilèd glances
That speak all the lips dare not say that they mean.

Begirt is the isle with such languorous beauty,
The day lies adream in its easeful repose ;
No sail ever brings the dread summons of duty ;
The place of that island no mariner knows.

And there, O belovèd, that gleam-haunted palace
Upreats its bright fabric of crystal for thee ;
And there would I drink from thy lips, like a chalice,
Forever the love that thou gavest to me.

Then lift up thine eyes from the spell they are under,
The sleepy young stars are grown dim in the skies ;
Afar down the heavens the wan moon doth wonder
Why yet thou delayest, belovèd, to rise.

My sail like a ghost in the moonlight is shaken
By breezes that blow to that isle of delight ;
Then lift up thine eyes, O belovèd, awaken,
And sail with me over the rim of the night.

THE BEAUTIFUL.

AT early dawn, outside the city wall,
They found him seated by the dusty way,
And having called to him without reply,
Passed by and left him sitting as he was ;
His forehead bared to meet the coming day ;
His matted hair still wet with dews of night ;
The pallid lids low drooping on his eyes,
As if to hold within their solemn deeps
Some shadowy creation of the soul,
Fleeting and luminous. They passed him by,
But seeing him low seated in the dust,
Holding within his hands a piece of clay,
They jeered at him, and mocked him as they passed ;
Then as a haggard fear came on his face
They mocked again, at which he crouched him down,
As some weak, trembling, hunted animal,
Exhausted, panting, sinks upon the ground,
With timid eye beseeching its pursuers ;
And, digging in the earth with muddied hands
He hid the clay from sight, and they passed by.

All day he labored on the moulding clay,
Beneath the sky spread out like molten brass
From east to west, wherein the sun's great rays
Smote like a breath of fire upon his head ;
Till as he looked about with half-closed eyes,
Strange shapes, with hair that flowed about like flame,
And eyes that blasted with their stormy glare,
Arose before him, dancing on the sand,
That broke from heat to flame beneath their feet ;
Then, mocking him, they fell into the sand.
Still he toiled on, and when his lips were parched
And dry as was the sand on which he sat,
All round about, as one that lives a dream,
He saw the leafy windings of a wood,
Dark, green, and restful as the twilight hour ;
While on his aching ears there softly fell,
As falls the cooling rain upon the sward,
The sleepy notes of half-awakened birds.
He whispered to himself : " It is so cool,
And all my body burns me with its thirst."
Quick, at the word, leaped up into the light,
From out the deep recesses of the wood,

A crystal spring, that in a limpid stream
Of gurgling eddies flowed to where he sat.
"Thank God," he said, and stooped his mouth to drink.
But as he stooped, the wood and water seemed
To tremble, evanescent, in the light,
And, mocking him, fell back into the sand ;
Till all alone beneath the sky he sat,
And held the clay between his fevered hands.
He looked about him where the wood had been,
And, sighing, turned his eyes upon the clay.
At sight of it, upon his haggard face
There came a smile that played about his lips,
And lingered there as he toiled on again.

So wore the day away unto its close,
And still he wrought, nor sought for any rest ;
And when men homeward turned at eventide
To seek the shelter of the city wall,
Finding him seated yet beside the way
Amid the dust, they passed unheeding by ;
Nor paused to see that there, beneath his touch,
The clay of earth had taken on a form

Whose beauty was before unknown of men.
When all were gone he raised him from the dust,
Slowly, as one doth wake out of a dream,
And tremblingly, as stricken to the death,
He staggered back to look upon the work
His wearied hands had wrought. Long stood he there,
And gazed, as one might gaze who looks and sees
His life-work crumbling down into the dust
Whence he had builded it. Then changed his face,
And in the awful anguish of that look
His every hope lay trampled on and dead.
He turned away from where he stood, and reeled
As one about to fall. "I have been blind,"
He said; "I have been blinded by the dust,
And all my work is nought. I thought to mould
And shape this thing of clay, that it might be
Like to the vision of the beautiful
Within my soul, but all my work is nought ;
And now I look upon it at the end,
And find it only clay, a thing of clay.
It is not beautiful," he said, and sighed,
While down his cheek there slowly rolled a tear.

He bowed his head, then, sinking on the sand,
He drew his long, thin arms across his face
To shut the world from sight of his despair.

The city, guarded by its walls of stone,
In sombre silence slept, and not a sound
In all the stretches of that desert waste
Disturbed the solemn stillness of the plain.
Then from the gathered night there came a voice
That gently fell upon his shaken spirit,
As falls a mighty calm on troubled deeps,
And stills their restless waters. Soft it said :
“ Not in the clay, O hope not in the clay,
Nor anywhere on earth, to find thy dream :
It is not given man to find it so.
Yet deem not all thy labor is for nought,
Nor all thy ceaseless striving has been vain ;
For by thy wearied toil beside the way,
By thy great pangs of thirst and fevered blood,
By all the anguish of this day in thee,
Unknowing thou hast builded greater things
Than thou hast dreamed of : through them thou hast
broke

The narrow earthy limits of thy soul,
And fashioned it in a diviner form,
And moulded it to know the beautiful.
Come, then, and I will show this thing to thee
That thou hast striven for, but hast not found."

.
At early dawn, outside the city wall,
Men found a statue moulded from the clay.
With bated breath they gazed upon its form,
And bowed their heads in reverential awe,
Whispering among themselves at the strange sight,
And saying to each other: "'Tis the work
Of some great god, who, hidden by the night,
Hath come from heaven, and wrought this perfect thing
From simple clay of earth to teach us how
The beautiful may be in simple things."
Then as they gazed upon it, one made speech :
" Here are some footprints ; if we follow them,
We may perchance find traces of this god."
At once, with eager steps, they follow far
Into the desert, till they reach a place
Where, covered on with rags and drifted sand,

There lies the form of him that yesterday
They mocked at, as he sat beside the way.
Then each looked to the other with a laugh :
“ We are at nought,” they said, “ to seek a god,
And come upon a beggar lying dead.”
Then turned they back, nor glanced again at him ;
But he slept on, untroubled by their mood,
One hand half buried in the shifting sand,
His dead eyes looking upward, ever up,
And softly round about his pallid lips
Was fixed a wondrous smile.

L'ENVOI.

CLOSE up the book ; put out the light ;
God rest you, ladies, and may all
The sweetest dreams of slumber thrall
Your starry eyes. Good night ! good night !

But stay, before you quench the light ;
Ere yet those bright eyes hide themselves
Behind their lids, as woodland elves
Behind the dainty petals white

Of some fair rose, I pray you look
Within your hearts' wide gallery ;
And in that nook, if any be
For pictures gathered from this book,

If, looking, you should chance to see—
As something tells me that you must—
Much that is fitter for the dust
Than there to hand unworthily,

I pray you, as you cast it thence
To lie forgotten and apart,
Out of your gentleness of heart
Your thoughts may build a sweet defence

For me, and teach your lips to say :

“In weariness he strove to seize,
And fix the beautiful in these,
But he has failed to have his way ;

“Yet for his very wish to show
The beautiful, and make it live,
Though he has failed, yet we forgive
Because he longed to make it so.”

And now, good gentlemen, I pray,
Your mercy, too ; nay, do not pause,
Nor stay your generous hearts, because
I did my first petition lay

Before their gentler feet, whose eyes
Looked their compassion ere a word
Could leave my pen: by them unheard
I was forgiven, not otherwise.

Will you, I know; but well content
To follow in their sweet control,
Till in the faces of the whole
I see one wide forgiveness blent.

Then close the book; put out the light;
God grant repose to one and all;
May brightest dreams of slumber thrall
Your eyes—again, good-night! good-night!





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